

## **Make Safety a Tradition This Holiday Season**

### ***Safe Kids Kansas offers tips for holiday home safety***

**TOPEKA, Kan.** – For many, the holiday season represents a time for family festivities and traditions. What few of us consider is that the holiday season is a time when there is an increased risk of home fires and other injuries. Safe Kids Kansas reminds parents and caregivers to take a few precautions when decorating for Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa and other winter festivities.

Candles are widely used in homes throughout the holidays, and December is the peak month for home candle fires. According to the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA), two out of every five home decoration fires are started by candles. Consider using flameless candles, which look and smell like real candles, and will keep children safe from burns. If you do use traditional candles, keep them at least 12" away from anything that can burn, and remember to blow them out when you leave the room or go to bed.

Holiday celebrations often include cooking or baking. It's important to know that unattended cooking is the leading cause of home fires and home fire injuries in the United States. Most cooking fires involve the stovetop, so keep your counter space nearby free from anything that can catch fire. If you're simmering, boiling, baking or roasting food, check it regularly and use a timer to remind you that you're cooking. Also, create a "kid-free zone" at least three feet around the stove and areas where hot food and drinks are prepared or carried. When making traditions in the kitchen, children who can follow directions may be ready to help out in the kitchen with tasks that do not involve knives, appliances, or heat. Some examples of child-friendly tasks include: tearing lettuce, rinsing fruits and vegetables under cold water, stirring ingredients in a bowl, using cookie cutters, measuring dry ingredients, or cutting soft fruits with a butter knife.

#### **If you decorate a tree, be sure to take these precautions:**

- Never leave a lit Christmas tree or other decorative lighting display unattended. Inspect lights for exposed or frayed wires, loose connections and broken sockets. Do not overload extension cords or outlets and do not run an electrical cord under a rug.
- Decorative lighting should be labeled with the seal of an independent testing lab. If it's not labeled for outdoor use, don't use it outdoors
- Natural Christmas trees always involve some risk of fire. To minimize the risk, get a fresh tree and keep it watered at all times or consider an artificial tree. Do not put the tree within three feet of a fireplace, space heater, radiator or heat vent. LED lights burn cooler than incandescent lights and pose a lower risk of fire.



- Do not burn Christmas tree branches, treated wood or wrapping paper in a home fireplace.
- Never leave burning candles unattended. Don't put candles on a tree or a natural wreath, or near curtains or drapes. Keep matches and lighters locked out of reach. Battery-operated flameless candles are an alternative that does not have a fire risk.
- Have working smoke detectors on every level of your home and in every sleeping area.

#### **Prevent accidental poisoning:**

- Keep alcohol (including baking extracts) out of reach and do not leave alcoholic drinks unattended. Don't forget to store all medications, including those for children, out of reach.
- Color additives used in fireplace fires are a toxic product and should be stored out of reach. Artificial snow sprays are also harmful if inhaled.
- Holly berries, mistletoe berries, poinsettias, amaryllis, boxwood, Christmas rose, Crown of Thorns, English ivy and Jerusalem cherry are all potentially harmful if eaten. If a child eats any part of a non-food plant, call the Poison Control Center at 800-222-1222.
- Have furnaces inspected annually, and install carbon monoxide detectors in your home.

"If children will be spending time in your home this season, do some basic childproofing in advance," said Cherie Sage, Safe Kids Kansas. "For example, keep ornaments and other decorations that have small parts, metal hooks or look like food out of reach of small children." Simple precautions can help ensure your family stays home for the holidays, and out of the Emergency Department.

For more information, visit [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org).

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#### **About Safe Kids Kansas**

Safe Kids Kansas works to prevent childhood injury, the leading cause of death and disability to children. Safe Kids Kansas is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing injuries in children. Coalition members include over 70 statewide organizations, agencies and businesses and a network of local coalitions across the state.

Visit us at [www.safekidskansas.org](http://www.safekidskansas.org) and on Facebook.

This information can be made available in alternative accessible formats upon request. For more information about obtaining an alternative format, you may contact Safe Kids Kansas at 785-296-1223, or [csage@kdheks.gov](mailto:csage@kdheks.gov). Both speech/hearing disabled and hearing Kansans can access the Kansas Relay Center by calling toll-free 1-800-766-3777. Callers should inform the relay operator of the number they wish to call and the type of call they are making direct, credit card, collect, person-to-person, et



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